

L.A. Rebellion

Creating a New Black Cinema

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

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Threads and Nets

The L.A. Rebellion in Retrospect and in Motion

CHUCK KLEINHANS

We're looking at a dynamic network that changed over time. Some of the threads have been severed and some of the nodes forgotten. To get a full, rich picture, we need to see as much as possible. I'm guided here by several questions. What produced the L.A. Rebellion? What has happened since the zenith of the Rebellion? What have we learned that we didn't know then? And how can we come to a better understanding of a specific political media movement to in turn better understand how to use art and culture activism in the future?

We can start by asking, what were the reasons for creating a new Black cinema? The answer seems fairly clear. Hollywood film did present African Americans, but largely as stereotypes, and despite the efforts of talented actors, creative sensibility seemed to stay within a white liberal orbit at best and always within a commercial entertainment imperative. Some arthouse films and the social documentary tradition provided a more serious perspective, but Blacks seldom had full creative control of such projects. Against this backdrop, it seemed that an alternative cinema with African American creative control could serve the Black community's rising expectations unleashed by the civil rights movement.

At the time, the 1970s and early 1980s, there was an expectation, a hope, a utopian desire, a pragmatic assessment that together advanced the idea of a distinct African American filmmaking, grounded in the maker's vision and integrity and speaking to a self-conscious and aware

social and political movement for Black liberation. By and large this would be a realist cinema, a continuation of neorealism, independent of the Hollywood studio system and the demands of entertainment media. The L.A. Rebellion films seemed to fit that hope, which was really an aspiration of young filmmakers and filmmakers-in-training. Following their work were some critics and intellectuals: Some of them journalists, some academics, some programmers and festival organizers or curators. And on the edge, some publicists, distributors, and exhibitors. And a few, very few, funders.

That model or hope fell apart in history and the encounter with the real world. In part this occurred because of a flawed analysis of actual conditions. In part it happened because other forces were in operation, still emerging at that point, that could not be easily foreseen. And in part this occurred because although hopes and dreams are necessary to take on the difficult task of making films and building a distinct film culture, they are not enough to sail against the storms of history. It pays to look at the past and what happened, not to rewrite heroes and villains to our liking, and not to assign blame, but to better understand what can be accomplished in terms of building a vibrant media counter-culture the next time. So: some lessons.

THE DREAM OF AN AUTONOMOUS AFRICAN AMERICAN FILM CULTURE

Understanding the complexities of an essentially industrial art takes time and experience. As students and young adults, the L.A. Rebellion participants were in process, and part of that process included a heavy dose of utopian optimism. That is normal and a basic element of any arts education. Using delayed gratification to accept postponed goals, developing artists have high hopes and a few blind spots. For the student filmmakers, some economic realities were bracketed: equipment and facilities were provided at school; cast and crew lived at home or in low-rent student situations and they would crew for each other for free; and by not promptly finishing your degree or continuing on as an adjunct teacher or staff person, you could maintain access to equipment, facilities, and other campus amenities for years. All of which gained synergy by student artists romanticizing the possibilities, especially if writing and directing dramatic feature films was the goal. But there were alternate ways. Some aspired to working in documentary modes where a fairly stable set of diffusion institutions existed: television, the educational market, established and new startup distributors

and exhibitors, and so forth. And there was a small but established space for artisanal artistic experimentation media.¹

The dream of an autonomous African American cinema was not just a matter of pragmatics. It also involved positive projection into the future. The major energies unleashed by the civil rights movement invigorated Black arts, in turn inspiring a new generation to cultural production. We now have a better assessment of how the post-civil rights activities turned out, which will be detailed later in this essay, but we can note here that the general harmony and unity of struggle for civil equality helped feed an optimistic view of the future. And new laws, policies, and initiatives for affirmative action opened doors. Given previous exclusion, younger artists pushed for new efforts. They aimed at independent achievement, autonomy rather than simple integration. And critical intellectuals shared and promoted this viewpoint. The default perspective took for granted that there was a coherent community that wanted and would support an alternative to mass consumer culture. And while there were differing degrees of emphasis on nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and other issues, the idea of a core community still held.

BLACK CINEMA: THE CONCEPT

Thinking about Black cinema by the major stakeholders (aspiring makers and culture activists) was framed by established ways of thinking at a time when underlying conditions were rapidly changing. There's no blame here; it is a condition of many social situations. But in the L.A. case, it was also colored by the influence of Third World students being present and by the interests of critical thinkers who shaped disparate people, objects, and events into a synthetic whole for persuasive purposes.

Throughout this period, by and large the critical thinkers of the L.A. Rebellion (both makers and critics) did not deal realistically with the nature of film viewing in the African American community. While dismissing Hollywood film as ideologically corrupt, they did not account for the mass audience's actual cinematic experience, which was primarily using cinema for entertainment in available leisure time. Jamaa Fanaka provides the exception to the rule, and his pursuit of action genres was cleverly attentive to community habits (and markets). But it is notable that much of the L.A. Rebellion corpus conspicuously avoids the three most common paths for Black performers to gain an audience:

sports, music, and comedy. The 1970s witnessed an expansion of celebrated African Americans in college and professional sports, while the rising visual presence of Black music, in particular in music video once Michael Jackson broke the color barrier on MTV in 1983, and of Black comedy, both acerbic stand-up (Richard Pryor) and mild middlebrow (Bill Cosby), found a welcome home in the times.

While it is easy to understand the aspiration for university-educated young artists to produce work that is serious and social in intent, often this work fails in the mass media marketplace. Where the educational and communication function can successfully fuse is in a different sector, one aimed at education and community. But this has remained an undervalued, understudied, and undertheorized part of African American media activity.² Actually, by going outside of the Rebellion moment, one can find a range of successful Black professionals working in the range of journalism, television, and the educational film market.³

THIRD CINEMA AND INDEPENDENT BLACK FILM

The L.A. Rebellion has come to be seen as a highpoint of the U.S. Black film movement, but that special attention has oversimplified the history, the context, and the development of critical thinking about African American cinema in general and the L.A. Rebellion in particular. The Rebellion's foundational theoretical perspective was embodied in the idea of Third Cinema, thanks largely to the central position of the faculty member Teshome Gabriel as a teacher of film history and criticism at UCLA in those years. Born in Ethiopia, he maintained strong ties with African filmmakers in particular, while being especially critical of Hollywood cinema. Gabriel's own book, his classes on cinema and social/political change, his connections with international filmmakers, and his screenings of Third World film provided a rich basis for developing a political aesthetics.⁴ But it must be understood that Third Cinema as originally conceived in Latin America was a militant and oppositional cinema, a revolutionary one. And that presumed both a specific political movement and a coherent community that the makers and films were speaking from and to.⁵ First, these conditions were not really in place in the United States in the 1970s. The unity of the civil rights movement had fractured into the Black Power era with different and often competing organizations and agendas.⁶ The Black Arts movement of the 1960s also faded. Of course examples from abroad, especially Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, were inspirational. But they were not



FIGURE 1.1. *To Sleep with Anger*, Harry entering the family's home frame grab.

always useable models for new work by U.S. filmmakers and taken together did not form a coherent whole.⁷ And the original center of Third Cinema was documentary film, militant and oppositional, in the United States probably best embodied in the Newsreel groups.⁸ In an expanded view, Third Cinema could encompass a wider range of politically progressive film, but the films then did not fit a formula.

In the process of branding the phenomenon the “L.A. Rebellion,” a residual nationalist identity politics pushed to frame the body of work in terms of the maker’s race and ostensible intentions. Yet this abstracted the films from a broader history of progressive political films dealing with race. A polemical stance for independence and against Hollywood (especially the Blaxploitation cycle) left hanging any accommodation with entertainment and the urban mass audience.

With the archival process underway, we can see the Rebellion as including a broad cluster of works, often short documentary, experimental, poetic, and essayistic films that show considerable diversity in themes and modes.⁹ But in critical discourse, the L.A. Rebellion is best known for developing an auteurist dramatic-feature Second Cinema for the arthouse and niche market. Charles Burnett’s *Killer of Sheep* (1977)

and *To Sleep with Anger* (1990), Julie Dash's *Illusions* (1982) and *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), and Haile Gerima's *Bush Mama* (1975), *Ashes & Embers* (1982), and *Sankofa* (1993) have been esteemed, taught, programmed, and written about as artistic independent achievements by makers who are singular writer-director creative artists.

IN ITS OWN TIME

It is useful to consider the L.A. Rebellion in terms of the larger national context of African American filmmaking at the time and also in relation to parallel or connected attempts to build distinct independent cinema sectors such as Latino, Asian American/Pacific, feminist, gay and lesbian, and experimental. In the late 1960s there was a national push for admission of minorities into public higher education, with its own particular character in L.A. and at UCLA. There was a group of eager future filmmaker students, who were highly motivated. And all this formed a distinctive local history in what is, after all, an entertainment industry town.

In June 1982, John Hess and I interviewed several key people for research on Los Angeles Black, Chicano, and Asian alternative filmmaking since the 1960s. As two of the *Jump Cut* co-editors we'd been following this development in articles and reviews we'd published. By meeting with people involved with the emergence of a new political film culture, such as at the Alternative Cinema Conference in 1979, we were eager to learn more about what was going on, and it was clear that L.A. was a very active area.¹⁰

We interviewed Teshome Gabriel, who had been teaching Third World cinema at UCLA since the mid-1970s and whose dissertation on Third Cinema in the Third World was about to be published as a book. Partway through the interview, we were joined by Dick Hawkins, a UCLA faculty member who was familiar with the earlier and later history. We also had the opportunity to interview filmmaker Charles Burnett, who was in production of his second feature-length film, *My Brother's Wedding* (1983), and Jesus Trevino, filmmaker and organizer of the Chicano Cinema Coalition. More views were added by Jason Johansen, a former UCLA student in the 1970s who at the time was an active critic and writer on Chicano film. Robert Nakamura, a UCLA film-production faculty member, co-founder of Visual Communications, and co-director of the feature *Hito Hata: Raise the Banner* (1980) had been present at the beginnings of the movement for Third World independent film in Los Angeles. Nancy Araki, director of Visual Com-

munications, discussed the history and activities of the Asian Pacific visual media center that she led. In addition, Claudia Springer and I interviewed filmmaker and former UCLA student Melvonna Ballenger.¹¹

Our interviewees concentrated on telling the history of each separate group. John and I saw many parallels and similarities among the stories, certain things that were mentioned that resonated with the concerns of others we interviewed. We could also draw on our knowledge of other independent filmmaking groups around the country.

Most importantly, we found a pattern of development among politically oriented media groups. In the context of a larger social and political movement for change, some experienced activist media people were joined by other new folks with politically engaged backgrounds. And new energy appeared in the form of students just beginning their studies. Together, they saw a common purpose. By and large, they were already closely related to the community and active in a period of intense effort. In Los Angeles this was specifically the demand for increased minority enrollment at UCLA, which was related to other areas of struggle within higher education institutions such as establishing African American studies and Chicano studies.¹² These folks came together to get some access to (a) training, gaining skills in media work; (b) equipment and facilities; and (c) in some cases money for production (but this varied a lot). At the same time, these people were exposed to other kinds of films than the commercial or mainstream norm, in particular to the new wave of Third World films connected to post-World War II national liberation struggles.

The participants made films, typically short documentaries that were closely related to what was happening in the communities they come from. In the process the whole group leaned a lot, typically working together in a variety of ways to give each other support. At a certain point of development, there was often a desire to form a “collective” organizational form, although the exact meaning of this and participation in it varied substantially and evolved over time.¹³ This formal or informal collective had problems and eventually fell apart or drastically changed.

The evolution or devolution had different aspects. Often there were different levels of skills and experience within the group. There were often different political or ideological positions: at the time, feminism and gay issues challenged some old-guard attitudes. And there were changes in individuals. As the first group of activists matured professionally, members had other obligations and wanted to do other projects.

Yet newcomers to the group still needed be taught so they could participate. The result was a cycle that some individuals found hindered their own professional development, while others were comfortable with always teaching newbies. Other significant changes occurred as economic and family life changed. As people established financial and personal relations, such as having children or taking on other responsibilities, they found they could not easily continue to live in the student or bohemian lifestyle they had when starting out. Within the group, some people advanced professionally and some didn't. Those who remained static sometimes seemed jealous of those who moved on. Those who succeeded could be seen as too ambitious, overly competitive, or separating from the group's original goals. Class, race, and gender privilege was often involved as well. People with an advantaged background may have had more resources to fall back on, or someone may have been supported by a successful partner who cushioned the hard times.

Of course, over time, one is in a different historical moment, a different set of circumstances created by matters beyond one's own control. The histories of almost all social-political projects in modern societies show similar patterns of initial growth and change, withering into decay or transforming into institutionalized and far less radical stability. For minority media groups, the initial organizing involved optimistic struggle that exhibited incredible amounts of human energy. In her retrospective look at the UCLA Ethno-Communications Program, Renee Tajima found that the 1968–74 years produced a profound change, but with uneven results.¹⁴ Chicano and Asian American veterans of the early years were able to establish continuing organizations; Blacks were not as well organized.

Since the 1970s another development has affected the terrain for understanding Black cinema. Critical thought has expanded and gives the audience a much greater range of understanding and engagement with film. The call for a totally independent Black cinema assumed, at heart, that cinema simply delivered a message. At its crudest this was a variant of the “hypodermic needle” model of how film affects audiences: directly injecting ideology into viewers unable to resist. The basis of most censorship activities in film history, this indoctrination assumption used the “image of” model in which negative images were condemned and positive images celebrated: the sort of thing that was popularized by Donald Bogle's widely read study of Hollywood racism, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks* (1973). Those calling for an independent Black cinema counterposed their ideal to the domi-



FIGURE 1.2. Production photograph of church scene in *As Above, So Below*.

nant Hollywood model. Even in its most sophisticated forms, the advocacy for an alternative was based in suspicion of the emotional effects of the studios' dramatic fiction features.¹⁵

Two different aspects are at work here. One, some of the L.A. Rebellion filmmakers did aspire to making dramatic features, and while they were "different" than the studio norm at the time, in retrospect they are clearly examples of arthouse auteurist Second Cinema. Gerima's *Ashes & Embers* (1982) follows a well-known subgenre: the life of a traumatized returned veteran. Dash's *Illusions* (1982), intended as a critique of Hollywood's racism, though short, works formally and narratively within the common standards of a Hollywood picture.¹⁶ Their later features, *Sankofa* (1993) and *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), respectively, fall well within the by then familiar arthouse/Sundance indie market sector, and Burnett's *To Sleep with Anger* (1990) is a low-budget Hollywood feature. While these films mark a maturing of the L.A. Rebellion, around the same time the commercial sector saw the increasing presence of Black-directed features aimed primarily at an African American audience, though with crossover in mind: Reginald Hudlin, *House Party* (1990); Mario Van Peebles, *New Jack City* (1991); John Singleton, *Boyz n the Hood* (1991); Bill Duke, *A Rage in Harlem* (1991); Spike Lee, *Jungle Fever* (1991); Carl Franklin, *One False Move* (1992) and *Laurel Avenue* (1993); the Hughes brothers, *Menace II Society*

(1993).¹⁷ These films' and filmmakers' presence knocked one leg off the argument that Blacks were excluded from directing mainstream commercial films.

The second factor was an increasing awareness in the 1970s and 1980s among critical thinkers that the "meaning" of a film was not simply a given thing contained by an aesthetic package, but rather meaning was generated by a dynamic process of the audience reading a film. Audiences didn't simply consume messages; they interpreted what was at hand and often subverted or reframed what might appear to be dominant. The field of cultural studies developed and flourished within this new understanding. In particular, key feminist and gay analysts showed how audiences can produce new meanings. And these ideas also opened up new ways of thinking about how African American viewers responded to films. It is worth thinking this through more rigorously, and a younger generation of critics have begun with a much greater awareness, using insights from cultural studies analyses and audience studies.¹⁸ A good reference point for this situation was the controversy surrounding Steven Spielberg's film version of Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple* (1985). Predictably, the film was heavily criticized by some Black male writers in particular for presenting images of Black misogyny as well as for being directed by a white man.¹⁹ Yet the film was generally well received in the black community and both defended and criticized by African American feminists. Jacqueline Bobo's "Black Women's Responses to *The Color Purple*," discusses the film in terms of reader-response analysis to show how and why the film provoked a community response.²⁰

COMPLEX NETWORK

In revisiting the past, we should also be alert to seeing a much more complex network and web of relations vis-à-vis other cinemas in considering the L.A. Rebellion. A useful conceptual grid would include the fact of a diverse range of political and socially progressive cinema arising in the 1960s. In the United States this would have to include the social documentary tradition, the realist and neorealist drama, the post-World War II social problem film, countercinema, and the political thriller. And it would have to note some remarkable independent films dealing with race: Lionel Rogosin's *Come Back Africa* (1959); John Cassavetes's *Shadows* (1959); Shirley Clarke's *The Connection* (1962), *The Cool World* (1964), and *Portrait of Jason* (1967); and Michael Roemer and Robert M. Young's *Nothing but a Man* (1964).²¹

In addition, it would recognize the interweaving of progressive politics of the era: anti-Vietnam War, civil rights, antinuclear and peace, anti-imperialist, the student movement, and the counterculture. A steadily increasing access to films from and about the developing world provides another strand, especially in the frame of national liberation, decolonization, and democracy.

Another important critical adjustment has to involve seriously reconsidering the critical and theoretical issues pursued at the time.²² For example, the exchange by Julianne Burton and Gabriel on critical theory in relation to Third World film and a later exchange on presumed limits to or flaws within U.S. Black filmmaking by Clyde Taylor, David Nicholson, and Zeinabu irene Davis were somewhat careless and overheated, but the central issues can still face useful reconsideration.²³ Revisiting some other past matters could also be productive, such as the original focus on theatrical film while disregarding the medium of video and the fact of television production as an important place for black expression. And no one seems to have noticed that the L.A. school never produced a comedy: why?²⁴

BLACK FILM AUDIENCE AND THE AUDIENCE FOR BLACK FILMS

We now have a much better perspective on the nature of the Black film audience. For several understandable reasons, during the L.A. Rebellion members of the group and proponents of their work tended to simplify the notion of “the Black audience.” This assumed that everyone in the audience was essentially the same and had the same interests: thus filmmakers went about making “our films,” about “our lives,” for “our audience.”

However, that analysis was flawed, in its own time and as social and economic changes continued. As Ed Guerrero has pointed out in his crucial essay “A Circus of Dreams and Lies: The Black Film Wave at Middle Age,” the African American audience has changed and evolved since the early 1970s Blaxploitation era.²⁵ The theatrical audience has shifted to a younger crowd, and the rise of the indie film sector, and the vast expansion of home viewing through VCRs/DVDs/cable TV/streaming creates a vastly different situation. Even more crucially, the Black community once conveniently thought of as a singular unity now appears diversified (and sometimes antagonistic) around class, gender, education, historical experience, and generational lines.

One positive and productive way of thinking and using the concept of the “L.A. Rebellion” rests in the knowledge that for the immediate

participants, those present at the formation and continuation, it made sense as a lived concept, a perceived bond, a common experience in a shared historical moment. If we add to this considerable changes in film economics and distribution, we can get a better purchase on the question. While the breakdown of the old studio system in the 1960s created a newer space for Hollywood mavericks in the 1970s, the industry recouped itself with the blockbuster formula High Concept film and increased its base in television. In the 1980s, money was increasingly made downstream rather than in theatrical release.²⁶ By the early 1990s, Hollywood earned over half of its theatrical receipts overseas. The conventional thinking in the business was that Black actors and Black-themed narratives were seldom viable in overseas markets, thus limiting financing for such projects.²⁷

As I've argued here, the current commonplace understanding of the L.A. Rebellion centers on a few very talented directors best known for their feature films. And those films tend to be ones that can be readily identified with established and consecrated cultural concerns: the idea of Third Cinema, the world of indie features, the expressions of Black feminism, the continuing validation of neorealist aesthetics, the mythic resonances of Africa's global diaspora. What I've tried to explain is that we are better served by a richer and more extensive way of thinking about both makers and films. I'll extend that by discussing three different and distinct figures who participated in the UCLA moment but whose subsequent careers were distinctly framed within communities: Don Amis, Carroll Parrot Blue, and Ben Caldwell.

DON AMIS

Don Amis was born and raised in Philadelphia, coming to UCLA in 1970 as part of a program to enroll talented minority students. In 1974, as an undergraduate, he directed *Ujamii Uhuru Schule Community Freedom School*, a short documentary about an Afrocentric inner-city primary school. His MFA film, another documentary, depicts an annual parade and celebration of community-based artists who make masks. Amis returned to Philadelphia and worked on educational programs, public-service projects, and documentaries for the Commonwealth Media Service and with WHYY, the Philadelphia PBS station. Thus his creative work during the Rebellion period and his subsequent career were grounded in community concerns and values.

Festival of Mask (1982) depicts an annual community arts parade and celebration that takes place every late October at Hancock Park in



FIGURE 1.3. *Festival of Mask*, painted face frame grab.

L.A. Shot and edited in a fairly conventional style, the film begins with mask-making activities in different places, such as Day of the Dead preparations at an East L.A. center, and then moves on to a parade populated by people from local community art centers, children from different schools, clowns and professional or semiprofessional performers, all enjoying the chance to show off their creations. A female voice-over provides basic background information. When we arrive at the fair we find a variety of activities and a lot of cross-cultural exchange. There are food stands with items such as Thai barbeque and Ethiopian stew, and the customers seem to be sampling a foreign cuisine. Many different mask types and techniques are shown, usually with a synchronous sound presentation by the maker: carving from wood, making from steel, face painting and makeup, leather, papier-mâché, gourds. Various performance activities are shown: an actor training program, *commedia dell'arte*, Ghana drummers, Japanese dance, Chinese Lion dance, and a mix of traditional forms such as Korean and Thai theatrical dance and hybrid forms of theater and dance borrowing from tradition. The overall mood of the film is genial fun, and the repeated depiction of a cultural combination across ethnic/racial/cultural lines reinforces the sense of a diverse and interactive community.

The film continues the founding mood of the UCLA Ethno-Communications Program, the forerunner of the L.A. Rebellion era, in stressing the mixed diversity of the community, and the film functions as an endorsement of the festival's sponsor, the L.A. Craft and Folk Art Museum. In its own time, *Festival of Mask* celebrates different ethnic and national traditions, shows cultural mixing; it stands at a different point than Don Amis's earlier undergraduate film, *Ujamii Uhuru Schule*, which presented an Afrocentric alternative school, cutting images of student activities against an extremely didactic voice-over by the school's director. In the earlier film, boys are shown in martial arts training. Without synch sound footage of classroom activity, the film (perhaps inadvertently) seems to show the students simply affirming Afrocentric slogans and motifs rather than developing an understanding. To a skeptical viewer, the images can be taken to show indoctrination rather than learning. The film presents a strong case for separation and nationalism (in the form of a rather vague and eclectic Pan-Africanism) that articulates a somewhat dogmatic and exclusionary view.²⁸ The later film avoids sloganeering and highlights cross-cultural encounter as a positive thing. But both films serve well as basic off-site public relations introductions to the institutions they represent: an inner-city school with a specific cultural orientation; a museum with a notable annual public event. Just the sort of thing that can be used by an official spokesperson in informing or fund-raising: pragmatic, useful, serviceable, and something that can be seen again and again. It's sometimes forgotten in the rush to affirm Art that media arts are always defined as well by Communication.

Taking the long view of Amis's UCLA films we can see them as rather typical student projects: undergrad and MFA. They set him up to have a career in media production aimed at education, media service, and public-sector communication: backstage, out of the spotlight. And thus Amis is not a suitable subject for grandstanding proclamations about revolutionary Third Cinema, but a productive and responsible craftsperson serving the public good.

CARROLL PARROTT BLUE

Carroll Parrott Blue's work is also closely tied to community, but in a different way. Arriving at the UCLA program in 1976, Blue was already an accomplished photographer whose photojournalism covered the Black Panthers and other Black Power events on the West Coast and the

arrival of Vietnam refugees at Camp Pendleton in 1975. She was a skilled film lab technician and had years of experience as a probation officer and working in youth services in Los Angeles. In the MFA program she made a significant documentary, *Varnette's World: A Study of a Young Artist* (1979), and then went on to direct a well-regarded film about African American photographer Roy DeCarava. Her career continued with two films on art in Nigeria and work on Robert Nakamura's feature *Hito Hata* (1980), the PBS television series *Eyes on the Prize* (1987–90), and Marlon Riggs's *Black Is . . . Black Ain't* (1994).

Varnette's World provides a portrait of a visual artist living in Los Angeles, positioning the painter between her local community and her accomplished artworks. Thus an opening panning shot shows parts of a gathering of people going to church, with voices of people meeting and greeting, and then continuing into church services with enthusiastic gospel singing. We also see Varnette Honeywood present in colorful kente cloth. The film continues with the artist explaining that she draws on subjects from her community. As viewers we witness this repeatedly as the film cuts from one of the artist's distinct images of a face or person to a film image of a person and then to the artist herself at work. In one scene Honeywood is working on a large outdoor mural and a woman passing by stops and talks with her, showing the connection between not only subject matter (the black community) and artist but also the community audience and someone who is likely to view the completed work. At another point we find an enthusiastic group of girls painting and preparing for a mural, and it is gradually revealed that Honeywood is their teacher and supervisor.

The painter articulates her desire to produce predominantly positive images for Black children, an official part of her role in an administrative post of developing art curricula for eight Los Angeles schools in coordination with a local university (University of Southern California). Though her greatest recognition for this kind of art practice came later in her career, the goal of presenting affirmative images is clearly present in this early stage of her work. The images are graphically strong and colorful, and they mark distinctive features, such as African American hairstyles, broad noses, brown eyes, and prominent lips. When Honeywood discusses her own history, the details connect to themes in her art: going to college at Spelman College in the Deep South and changing from an education major to art; attending an international art festival in Lagos, Nigeria, and meeting Black artists from around the world. The connections are repeated in the present, with her teaching children



FIGURE 1.4. *Varnette's World*, artist at work frame grab.

in the community and attending a local Afrocentric arts festival, with music and dancing as well as visual arts and crafts. Again, a rapid montage cuts between active performers dancing and drumming and her paintings, allowing the still art to become dynamic while underpinned by rhythmic music.

The film addresses topical political issues in a very indirect way. At a small meeting of community artists, participants gather around a table to discuss the difficulties of having a career in the arts. Some problems are vaguely laid out, but the context or the issues are not detailed. Actually, at the time there was national and local attention to the federal Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) begun in 1974. Designed to subsidize beginning employment in the public sector, with an aim to give people usable skills and experience that they could then use to get a regular job, CETA was widely used by community organizations to advance programs. The catch was that the enrollees had to move on after eighteen to twenty-four months, and the program was endlessly embroiled in conservative attempts to cut funding (it was phased out nine years later by the Reagan administration). While arts organizations were early adopters, setting up CETA training programs, because the

funds were awarded by geography, local politicians eventually caught on and competed by pushing civic programs that they could shape and with which they could claim credit and reward constituents. Artists did indeed experience the end of CETA and other programs, and the limited window of funding. The point being that *Vernette's World* can allusively refer such larger matters but that it would be inappropriate to actually explore such matters in a twenty-six-minute piece aimed at providing a portrait of the artist. The film touches on similar matters that could raise larger questions, including Afrocentricity, community art festivals, arts education in the public school curriculum, and so forth.

By presenting a positive image of an artist who works in the vein of presenting grassroots-based positive images, *Vernette's World* functions in an obviously instructive way. The length is just right for viewing in a classroom or meeting presentation, to be followed by a discussion. A wide audience ranging from children to elders, ordinary folks to professionals, African Americans of course, but with no barriers to others, serves to make the film widely accessible. The subject is “uplifting,” inspiring positive and optimistic feelings about this artist and her activities. These very qualities in Honeywood’s art were subsequently validated when actor and comedian Bill Cosby decided to use Honeywood’s art in every room of the set for his immensely successful TV sitcom *The Cosby Show* (1984–92), depicting a successful professional-class African American nuclear family. With his long-standing personal emphasis on “positive image” entertainment, Cosby’s endorsement boosted Honeywood’s recognition.

Much of Blue’s subsequent career was spent teaching media production at San Diego State. During this time she produced a major documentary work published as a book and accompanied by an interactive DVD-ROM: *The Dawn at My Back: Memoir of a Black Texas Upbringing*.²⁹ *Dawn* combines a personal autobiography and a family history with reflections on the history of African Americans in twentieth-century Houston, Texas, and the dominant mass culture represented in photography and commercial cinema. While working with L.A.’s Asian American media arts center, Visual Communications, Blue appreciated the center’s collections of family archival materials, especially photos. Her family’s photos and letters are woven together with the troubled history of her parents’ marriage and her own difficult relation with her mother. This most personal level of history is cast in a larger sense of her childhood community, a pioneering Black neighborhood framed within deadly racist violence against the residents, fiercely maintained

segregation, and a description of how the community coped and responded. In a much larger frame, Blue reflects on photojournalism, such as images in *Life* magazine; and the movies, ranging from Douglas Sirk's glossy melodrama of passing, *Imitation of Life* (1959), to a teen infatuation with the star image of Harry Belafonte and reflections on the star's experience with the Hollywood blacklist. Using the metaphor of the quilt, a patterned piece made of disparate scraps, and a notable and increasingly recognized form of African American women's art, Blue moves through different times and forms in an associative rather than linear and chronological way, perfectly suited to the accessible style of a DVD-ROM presentation.³⁰ The result is a powerful experience that allows movement from the most intimate, particular, and painful moments of a mother-daughter quarrel to the pair sharing the opportunity to see *The Graduate* (Dir. Mike Nichols, 1967) in Houston's downtown movie palace theater, formerly open only to white audiences, thus marking Black community progress.

Blue returned to Houston in the millennium years as a research professor at the University of Houston. Using her art experience as a base, and leveraging her administrative skills, she embarked on public art, architecture, and environmental projects to improve the Third Ward, her childhood neighborhood.³¹

BEN CALDWELL

Another L.A. Rebellion artist with close ties to the community, Ben Caldwell has been an anchor in the Leimert Park neighborhood of Los Angeles.³² Running a storefront art space since his return to L.A. after teaching at Howard University from 1981 to 1984, Caldwell has taught youth a variety of media production skills, including working with sound recording, and he has developed a community of aspiring media makers and hip-hop and rap musicians.

Caldwell's *I & I: An African Allegory* (1979), his MFA film, stands as an anomalous case in the flow of L.A. Rebellion cinema. From the most experimental and avant-garde maker in the group, the film is a striking mix of different modes: fictional drama, documentary, and formal abstraction. David James provides an excellent summary of the film.

Prefixed by titles asserting that it takes its inspiration from the sweep of African history and that its style is rooted in the virtuosity of Africa's religion and lyric arts and African American music, *I & I* uses an African legend to teach Americans how to transcend the opposition between I and You

introduced, the film argues, by the Devil and to return to the undifferentiated African commonality of I and I. Composed of more or less discrete sections, each filmed in a different style, it is unified by the figure of a beautiful, blue-robed woman who becomes its protagonist in the manner of the trance film: scenes of women dancing through nighttime forests transformed with abstract visuals come to rest on a vision of her nestling in the roots of a tree. She then appears wandering in alienation through the high-rise buildings of the Los Angeles financial district. Subsequent sections feature extended montages of still photos of black people that come to focus on civil resistance, a dramatic section in which a black man performs a soliloquy over the body of his dead white father, and an oral history section in which an old lady tells a young girl tales of her ancestors' struggles under slavery. The woman's visionary re-experiencing of the fall, historical recovery, and finally the regeneration of African people concludes as, to the sounds of African music and the reading of a poem by Amiri Baraka, birds fly across the sky in a red sunrise that dissolves into a pan down the regal figure of the blue-robed woman.³³

The filmmaker has said that he intended to make a film that would demonstrate his ability to work in all three forms. In that sense the film functions as a "calling card" to showcase technical prowess or ambition rather than as a way to develop a consistent, controlled narrative and style. This is a common characteristic of some student and young artist media making, particularly common in animation work, where early career efforts often exhibit a "sampler" aesthetic as the maker progresses through successive and more complex mastery of various skill levels and technologies.³⁴ But *I & I* also highlights problems characteristic of student films concerning other issues such as recycling and piracy. Without the capital to clear music rights or pay for original music, students often borrow existing music but are then blocked from ever circulating the films beyond the festival and classroom circuit.³⁵ Most acutely, the montage of photographs is drawn from mostly well-known and widely republished photos, including some famous Diane Arbus images apparently meant to imply that white people are grotesques. The result is, regrettably, a certain trite discourse. The documentary interview section suffers from the elder's sometimes absent delivery; a docudrama reenactment would have been more effective. And the dramatic soliloquy (a demanding moment for any actor) suffers from the performer's limited range and the passage's unexplained motivation.

Despite these problems of ambition overreaching practical matters, *I & I* stands as an intriguing example of an often overlooked creative energy in formal flexibility and imaginative style in the L.A. Rebellion.³⁶ It also marks a high point for the use of allegorical visual association to

invoke Afrocentricity. The movement from Africa to the United States is imaginative rather than spatial, declarative rather than historical, spectacular rather than narrative.

One of the early participants in the Ethno-Communications Program, Caldwell includes as a final title to *I & I* the notice that the film is dedicated to Elyseo Taylor, who was “fired for racist reasons.” After finishing his degree, Caldwell tried to set up a production center for Black filmmakers in Los Angeles, refurbishing a house with a screening room, writers space, and editing space. But the project couldn’t be carried on, in contrast to the more effective institutions of Asian Americans and Chicanos in L.A. On his return to L.A. in 1984 he established a new center, aimed at young people in the neighborhood. In contrast to the metaphorical Pan-African community of *I & I*, Caldwell’s KAOS Network is completely grounded in the Leimert Park neighborhood. As a teaching and performance space, the storefront draws neighborhood youth to engage with a variety of media and expressive forms: poetry, hip-hop, film and video, sound recording and mixing, and music performance. KAOS Network functions as an exhibition space and also a classroom for digital media training and through video conferencing puts local kids in touch with their counterparts in other locations, cities, and countries.

A MOMENT IN MOVEMENT

An imperfect storm created conditions for several decades of independent Black filmmaking in Los Angeles. With the passage of the federal Civil Rights Act in 1964, a new phase in African American progress began. In Southern California, the Watts Rebellion of 1965 created a shock wave for change accelerating minority admissions that enabled some access, some professional training, some opportunities. Actual participants used the possibilities in different ways: for Jamaa Fanaka it meant an opening to make exploitation films; for others it led to working in the industry; for yet others it was a path to being semiautonomous creative artists with the burden of patching together funding for this most expensive of arts. For politically directed intellectuals such as Gerima, Gabriel, and Clyde Taylor, the moment of change seemed to open a new opportunity, one they read through their understanding of the Black Arts movement of 1960s America and the international frame of Third World film activity in Latin America and Africa. The original imperative of Third Cinema was to create a radical alternative art: in

form, in content, in mode of address, in audience, and in effect. Activist, interventionist, collective and communal, and existing outside of commercial film and established institutions, Third Cinema inspired the goal of a new Black cinema. That radical aspiration could push student artists through their twentysomething years, but it doesn't suffice for the pragmatics of having a career, supporting a family, keeping one's skills honed, and continuing to create.³⁷

Earlier I remarked that African American artists, intellectuals, and artists have often called for both integration and separation. Thinking of the L.A. Rebellion in this frame, we can witness African Americans such as Amis, Blue, and Caldwell mastering the dominant culture's technologies and institutions while validating the strengths of their communities. With its historical importance now clear, the L.A. Rebellion's continuing significance grows as it becomes woven into a new generation's imagining of the community's past and projection of a better future.³⁸

NOTES

This essay was written with the help of many people to whom I owe thanks: the L.A. Rebellion organizers, Allyson Nadia Field, Jan-Christopher Horak, and Jacqueline Stewart, who led the project, involving archival preservation, a three-month film program, a landmark conference, and outstanding editing advice. The conference participants inspired many new ideas about my essay. My research partner and *Jump Cut* co-editor John Hess shaped the questions, research, and writing decades ago. As always, Julia Lesage gave intellectual and practical support. For their own enthusiasm for African American media and makers, and for answering questions and providing key ideas, I want to thank Zeinabu irene Davis, Martha Biondi, Elizabeth K. Jackson, Shannon Gore, and Claudia Springer. Ben Caldwell generously showed me *I & I* and some of his other creative work, and he answered many questions one afternoon in the early 1990s at KAOS, his Leimert Park art center; Jamaa Fanaka stopped by, enthusing about his upcoming exploitation film, *Street Wars* (1992), and I suddenly saw what some might think were two extremes—fast and dirty commercial entertainment and meditative personal artisan work grounded in the local community—conversing and occupying the same space and moment. Crossed threads revealed an unexpected node in the net; beyond theoretical constructs, the human face of supportive colleagues. Later in the decade, the late Edward Bland told me of his enthusiasm for working with the kids at KAOS when I interviewed him. I want to dedicate this essay to the memory of two warm and talented Black filmmakers who always thought of their art as part of a community: Elspeth kydd and Bill Gunn.

1. UCLA, a part of the state university system, was the main institutional anchor of the L.A. Rebellion, training students in both fiction drama and

documentary modes. The University of Southern California, a private, elite, expensive school centered its filmmaking program on training for fictional features in the existing industry. Starting in 1969, the American Film Institute's Conservatory Program also offered postgrad training in dramatic film, which Julie Dash attended before going to UCLA. Another area hub was CalArts, which offered extensive concentration in animated film, and from the late 1960s on, in artist and experimental film. In addition, Los Angeles has always drawn international people hoping to learn film by apprenticeship in the industry or arriving with previous training abroad that they hoped to turn into an industry career.

2. Actually, just the opposite often reigns, with standard complaints that Hollywood does not satisfactorily fund or promote socially and artistically serious films, or claims that a film that earned more than its production budget was "successful." Such arguments are based in a naïve and uninformed understanding of the Hollywood system. I discuss Hollywood and indie economics at length in Chuck Kleinhans, "Independent Features: Hopes and Dreams," in *New American Cinema*, ed. Jon Lewis (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 307–27; and in Chuck Kleinhans, "1993: Movies and the New Economics of Blockbusters and Indies," in *American Cinema of the 1990s: Themes and Variations*, ed. Christine Holmlund (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 91–114.

3. Notable in this area are New York-based William Greaves (producer of the key TV series *Black Journal*) and St. Clair Bourne. Documentary media, particularly about ongoing issues rather than unique events, tend to have long legs, being profitable and widely available in distribution for many years. Sales and rentals to schools, libraries, and targeted audiences makes the work viable. Well-established documentary-short distributors such as Newsreel and California Newsreel (both leftist), Women Make Movies, and Frameline (LGBT) and distribution co-ops such as New Day actively sought works about race issues. Thus a Black feminist documentary maker had a better chance for long-term distribution stability than a Black male feature maker. An acute study of public-service broadcasting produced by and for African Americans from 1968 to 1974 is Devorah Heitner, *Black Power TV* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013). For an excellent overview of Black documentary, see Phyllis R. Klotman and Janet K. Cutler, *Struggles for Representation: African American Documentary Film and Video* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

4. Teshome Gabriel's own book is *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982).

5. The concept of Third Cinema, first articulated in a 1969 manifesto by Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, described First Cinema as Hollywood-centered dominant commercial entertainment media with imperialist stretch. Second Cinema was occupied by European and Eurocentric auteurist and arthouse work. Third Cinema was an oppositional alternative to both, militant and confrontational. The key founding documents can be found in Michael T. Martin, ed., *New Latin American Cinema*, vol. 1, *Theory, Practices, and Transcontinental Articulations* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997). A particularly acute reassessment is Anthony R. Guneratne

and Wimal Dissanayake, eds., *Rethinking Third Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

6. This was particularly the case in Los Angeles with a shoot-out on the UCLA campus between the Black Panthers and the US Organization in 1969. Various and conflicting reports make clear that the shadow of this event shaded subsequent campus political activity, including filmmaking.

7. Cuban film, for example, often held up as the standard of Third Cinema, ranges from newsreels and party-policy propaganda through challenging new forms of documentary and satire to neorealist narratives and operatic epics, including turns to popular genres and European co-productions heavy on tropical exoticism. Advocates for "Third Cinema" tend to pick and choose from the variety rather than account for the complex whole, Gabriel included.

8. By the late 1970s there were two: the New York-based Third World Newsreel and the San Francisco-based California Newsreel. Both were strongly leftist, anti-imperialist, and antiracist. For an extremely detailed discussion, see Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

9. The UCLA Film & Television Archive retrospective "L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema" shows such diversity and balance.

10. An overview report on the event is Chuck Kleinhans, Ellen Seiter, and Peter Steven, "Alternative Cinema Conference: Struggling for Unity," *Jump Cut* 21, (November 1979): 35–37, www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC21folder/ReportACC.html. See also the individual reports by various editors in the same issue as well as reprinted conference documents.

11. Claudia Springer continued to interview L.A. film women, publishing her findings in the article "Black Women Filmmakers," *Jump Cut* 29 (February 1984): 34–37, www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC29folder/BlackWomenFilmkrs.html. Discussing fifteen different filmmakers, including three from Africa, Springer gives crucial social and historical context for the women and the issues they faced as well as detailing their artistic work.

12. At the time, California had the most extensive system of public higher education in the United States. The colleges and universities had extremely low tuition rates.

13. Around the same time, our publication, *Jump Cut*, had editing collectives in Chicago and Berkeley.

14. Renee Tajima, "Lights, Camera . . . Affirmative Action," in *Independent* (March 1984): 16–18.

15. Bogle is a good example, though in the later expanded and updated version of his book he more clearly discusses the issues, referencing newer films made for a primarily African American market. Speaking from a strong advocacy stance, Clyde Taylor's writings push anti-Hollywood independence as a prime concern, as in "New U.S. Black Cinema," *Jump Cut* 28 (April 1983): 41, 46–48, www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC28folder/NewBlackCinema.html. From a scholarly viewpoint, Mark A. Reid tends to work within the same model of the film, directly delivering a meaning in his *Redefining Black Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Reid's later follow-up, *Black Lenses, Black Voices: African American Film Now* (Lanham, MD: Rowman

and Littlefield, 2005), moves to a wider recognition of meaning being shaped by the interaction of film and viewer, thus showing a range of responses.

16. This is not so surprising when you are aware that Dash completed the well-regarded American Film Institute's director's program, aimed at preparing students for roles in the industry, before entering the MFA program in film at UCLA.

17. Nelson George provides an entire chapter highlighting just the 1991 production of Black-directed features, in his book *Blackface: Reflections on African-Americans and the Movies* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 107–29.

18. For example, Stephane Dunn, "*Baad Bitches*" and *Sassy Supermamas: Black Power Action Films* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Todd Boyd, *The Notorious Ph.D.'s Guide to the Super Fly '70s: A Connoisseur's Journey through the Fabulous Flix, Hip Sounds, and Cool Vibes That Defined a Decade* (New York: Broadway Books, 2007); Yvonne D. Sims, *Women of Blaxploitation: How the Black Action Film Heroine Changed American Popular Culture* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006); Paula J. Massood, *Black City Cinema: African American Urban Experiences in Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003); and Novotny Lawrence, *Blaxploitation Films of the 1970s: Blackness and Genre* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

19. Hostility to Black feminism was an ongoing issue in the 1970s and 1980s, circulating around key texts such as Ntozake Shange's play *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Enuf* (San Lorenzo, CA: Shameless Hussy Press, 1975), and Michelle Wallace's book *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (New York: Dial Press, 1979).

20. Jacqueline Bobo, "Black Women's Responses to *The Color Purple*," *Jump Cut* 33 (February 1988): 43–51. www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC33folder/CIPurpleBobo.html. Bobo extends the argument in her book *Black Women as Cultural Readers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), which includes an analysis of *Daughters of the Dust*.

21. David E. James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), provides a good introduction. Given her several Black-themed features, it is curious that Shirley Clarke is almost never mentioned in relation to the L.A. Rebellion, although she taught at UCLA from 1975 to 1985.

22. Michael T. Martin's three anthologies provide a foundation: Martin, *New Latin American Cinema*, vol. 1, *Theory, Practices, and Transcontinental Articulations*; Michael T. Martin, ed., *New Latin American Cinema*, vol. 2, *Studies of National Cinemas* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997). Michael T. Martin, ed., *Cinemas of the Black Diaspora: Diversity, Dependence, and Oppositionality* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995).

23. Julianne Burton, "Marginal Cinemas and Mainstream Critical Theory," *Screen* 26, nos. 3/4 (May–August 1985): 2–21; Teshome Gabriel, "Colonialism and 'Law and Order' Criticism," *Screen* 27, nos. 3/4 (May–August 1986): 140–47. The Taylor/Nicholson/Davis exchange is reprinted in Martin, *Cinemas of the Black Diaspora*.

24. This is especially odd, given that the Rebellion era could be seen as framed by two terrific comedies set in Los Angeles: Michael Schultz's *Carwash*

(1976) and Robert Townsend's *Hollywood Shuffle* (1987). Nor did the Rebellion represent, much less address, African American gay issues and individuals. Clarke's *Portrait of Jason* (1967), made when she was in New York, marks a notable start, but it was not until Berkeley-based Marlon Riggs made *Tongues Untied* (1989) that the subject was really explored.

25. Ed Guerrero, "A Circus of Dreams and Lies: The Black Film Wave at Middle Age," in *The New American Cinema*, ed. Jon Lewis (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 328–52.

26. In the 1990s it was common for commercial films to make only half of their gross in theatrical release. Today many theatrical premiers are seen in the industry as simply commercials for later platform revenues.

27. A default Hollywood compromise was the buddy/sidekick figure pairing a Black actor with a white one, as discussed by Ed Guerrero in "The Black Image in Protective Custody: Hollywood's Biracial Buddy Films of the Eighties," in Manthia Diawara, ed., *Black American Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 237–46. But even the screen presence of a relatively high-profile figure such as Eddie Murphy tends to be marked by comic roles that fall into stereotypes.

28. Black nationalists were not the only people in the 1960s–70s era who established alternative schools on untested premises. Various counterculture and religious sects and fundamentalist groups initiated day-care, elementary, home-schooling, and after-school programs based on strong sectarian perspectives. Relatively few thrived and few survived.

29. Carroll Parrot Blue, *The Dawn at My Back: Memoir of a Black Texas Upbringing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003).

30. Unfortunately, the 2003 publication leaves the DVD in a now-archaic computer operating system platform. I am still able to view it on my third-oldest laptop, but on none of the others or my desktop machine.

31. Lisa Gray, "Woman's Goal: Transformation of Southeast Houston," *Houston Chronicle*, February 13, 2013, www.houstonchronicle.com/life/gray/article/Woman-s-goal-transformation-of-southeast-Houston-4282520.php#0.

32. Leimert Park became an arts hub in the 1980s, drawing on various institutions earlier located in other Black neighborhoods, particularly Central Avenue. Eric Gordon provides an excellent survey in "Fortifying Community: African American History and Culture in Leimert Park," in *The Sons and Daughters of Los: Culture and Community in L.A.*, ed. David E. James (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 63–84.

33. David E. James, *The Most Typical Avant-Garde: History and Geography of Minor Cinemas in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 334.

34. The film's ambitious optical effects were done by distinguished filmmaker Pat O'Neill, with a bit more imagination than perfected craft at this point in his career.

35. This problem applied to numerous L.A. Rebellion films, including *Killer of Sheep*. Music rights are particularly closely policed, and clearance typically involves working through expensive, experienced law firms that manage such matters. Few students or young artists could ever overcome the copyright management fees and barriers.

36. Other notable examples include Barbara McCullough's *Water Ritual #1* (1979) (photographed by Caldwell) and Zeinabu irene Davis's *Cycles* (1989), *Trumpetistically*, *Clora Bryant* (1989), and *A Period Piece* (1991).

37. I address some of these issues in Chuck Kleinhans, "Charles Burnett," in *Fifty Contemporary Filmmakers*, 2nd ed., ed. Yvonne Tasker (London: Routledge, 2010), 60–69.

38. Examples include Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West: Culture and Struggle in Postwar Los Angeles* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Monique Guillory and Richard C. Greene, eds., *Soul: Black Power, Politics, and Pleasure* (New York University Press, 1998); and the brilliant study by Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics and Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).